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Fiction in Central and Eastern European Film Theory and Practice

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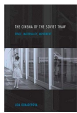
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Introducing Fiction in Central and Eastern European Film Theory and Practice

J. Alexander Bareis and Mario Sluġan

Keywords

Hans Vaihinger, Käte Hamburger, Thomas Pavel, Lubomir Dolozel, Wolfgang Iser, Gertrud Koch, Kendall L. Walton; theory of fiction; double communication situation; transmedia; Soviet film theory; German film theory

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What is fiction, and how do we define it? These two questions are among the oldest and controversial questions in the humanities in general, and within the Arts in particular. Fiction appears to be a truly transmedial and transcultural phenomenon, and it has been since its beginning – even though it is an unsettled question when exactly the notion of fiction became a topic of explicit interest for the first time. Arguably, both Plato and Aristotle already discussed the notion, and the literature on the topic added since then makes it clear that fiction is an integral part of what makes us human. Among the scholars from the Central and Easter European cultural milieu, some of the most influential contributions to theorizing fiction as a concept have been those by Hans Vaihinger, Käte Hamburger, Thomas Pavel, Lubomir Dolozel, and Wolfgang Iser.

The boldest among these thinkers is Vaihinger (1911), who expanded the pantheon of induction and deduction with fiction as the crucial method for reasoning through which we can know the world. According to Vaihinger's idea of Fictionalism, a thought which is even theoretically false may be of great practical purpose in arriving at the truth. Conceived this way, fictions are mental structures which although recognised as contrary to reality or self-contradictory, nevertheless have great practical value in sciences, mathematics, politics or ethics. For instance, when in calculating movements of bodies we assume that the bodies' mass is concentrated in a single point, we know that this is not actually the case, yet it makes calculation easy and gives correct results. For practical purposes, we behave "as if" the assumptions were correct although we know perfectly well that they are not. Although mainly interested in scientific fictions (broadly conceived), Vaihinger thus makes the point that all fictions – aesthetic and ethical alike – have a common psychological root in the faculty of imagination.

The landmark contribution by Käte Hamburger to the theory of fiction is her seminal *Die Kunst der Dichtung* (1957, thoroughly revised 1968 and translated as *The Logic of Poetry*), a rigid, analytical, philosophical and language-based approach to fiction aimed at the domain of "Dichtung" (roughly "poetics") – including a chapter on film. Despite being one of the great contributions to the field, Hamburger's work has long been neglected and marginalised. Recently, though, there have been a number of attempts to reconstruct the theoretical, and in particular the philosophical roots of her work (cf. Claudia Löschner 2013), which was one of the earliest modern attempts to analytically describe the phenomenon of fiction in different artforms. Her impact on the theory of film, possibly even more neglected and marginalised than her work on literature, still remains to be fully investigated and reconstructed. A first and thought-provoking discussion is presented in the interview of film theorists Gertrud Koch and Dominique Blüher by Johanna Bossinade (2003), a special issue devoted to Hamburger's work. Arguably, Hamburger's impact on theories of fiction might have been greater abroad, in particular on works by Metz and Ouel, as Koch and Blüher discuss.

Focusing on aesthetic fictions, Pavel (1986) and Dolozel (1998) have been the key figures in developing what is known as the possible worlds theory of fiction.¹ Drawing on ideas which can be tracked as far back as Leibniz and which have been operationalised in post-Second World War analytic philosophy, Pavel and Dolozel propose that fictional worlds are a subset of possible worlds where possible worlds have been introduced to deal with problems of modal logic. More precisely, possible worlds help us flesh out the referentiality and truth-function of various types of propositions. True propositions, for instance, are those that are true in the actual world ("Angela Merkel is the German chancellor"), while possible propositions are those that are true in at least one possible world ("Martin Schultz is the German chancellor"). Within this framework, fictional worlds are possible worlds made up of propositions such as "Raskolnikov lived in St Petersburg", ushered in through a communicative practice of speech acts.

In his work on fiction, Iser (1979)² criticises the attempts focusing on possible worlds which see fiction as being parasitic on language and which are primarily interested in the problems of fictional denotation and truth value. For him, such problems of reference are a sign that we should overhaul our theories on reference rather than the criterion according to which we need to define fiction. In addition to dismissing definitional attempts based on referentiality, he shows how no interest in a communicative theory of fiction, instead, he proposes an anthropological approach which should be understood as a precondition for thinking about both the ontology (in its referential sense) and the use (in the communicative sense) of fiction. Under this model, the real/fiction dyad is replaced with a triad of real/fictive/imaginary. Crucially, fictive is understood as an act which gives shape to spontaneous imaginings of daydreams, dreams, hallucinations, etc.) The act itself involves selection (of different systems from the actual world), combination (of elements ranging from linguistic units to character and events), and self-disclosure (of a text as fiction which demands an "as if" attitude). But perhaps the most relevant of Iser's contribution has been to track the history and understanding of fiction. Whereas Plato and Aristotle address the problem is aptly demonstrated by the fact that the term "fiction" appears altogether five times in the English versions of the four volumes cited.³ After the Second World War, Siegfried Kracauer (1960) has shown some interest in the matter, but his conclusion is essentially that whereas experimental cinema and films of fact (with documentary as its key form) are non-story films, fiction film is tantamount to story film.

Similarly, the canon of Soviet film theorists (Lev Kuleshov, Dziga Vertov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Sergei Eisenstein) do not have significantly more to say on the subject (sympotomatically, there is also not a single mention of "fiction" in Pudovkin, 1958), for example. Their interest differs from their Central European peers' almost exclusive interest in fiction film and they oftentimes vocally agitate for the importance of nonfiction film (cf. Kuleshov 1974), but they do not focus on theorizing the difference between fiction and nonfiction. Although Eisenstein (1988) even calls for a cinema which moves beyond the media-suitcase approach (but which amounts to neither a mix or two to a new type of film), he says very little about what constitutes fiction as opposed to nonfiction in the first place. In fact, the terminology he uses – "played" ("igrovoy") versus "non-played" ("neigrovoy") film – suggests that the presence of live actors and plotting is crucial for film fiction, and their absence for film nonfiction. Even Vayns (1984), who was undoubtedly the greatest proponent and practitioner of nonfiction film among Soviet theorists, subscribes to essentially the same view. Although he clarifies in more detail one of the main features of his group's filmmaking – catching life unawares – much like Eisenstein's work, his understanding of the dichotomy between played and non-played film is implicit rather than clearly spelled out.

Rather, it seems that for more detailed and explicit contributions to the understanding of the distinction between fiction and nonfiction in Soviet film theory, we need to turn to the pages of Novy Iff, active between 1927 and 1929 (Ben Brewster 1971). In a debate about the relative value of played and non-played cinema, Sergei Treit'akov proposes a tripartite typology of cinema: in *flagrante*, scripted, and played. His key conclusion is that the distinction between played and non-played cinema is only a matter of degree, i.e. that it hinges on the level of play or deformation of the actual material. Deformation includes everything from the selection of the subject matter through cinematography and mise-en-scene to editing. In a direct rebuke, Boris Aravtsov effectively argues that narrative structure should not be understood as an element of deformation and that it in no way defines whether something is played or not. Viktor Shklovski adds a crucial insight that catching life unawares is neither sufficient nor necessary for something to count as nonfiction – staged affairs can as easily amount to nonfiction. Unfortunately, such debates later on, however, and it appears that Aravtsov's and Shklovski's key contributions were soon forgotten.⁴

During the last decades, however, the concept of fiction as the notion of fiction has once again become a trending topic within the humanities. With a somewhat peculiar terminological shift of focus towards the notion of "fictionality" and not necessarily "fiction", research about the phenomenon of fiction has gained momentum, in particular within literary narratology. In addition to numerous publications during the last few years, the study of fictionality has for the first time in history even been institutionalised: In 2018, the *International Society for Fiction and Fictionality Studies* was founded, highlighting the prominence of the currently popular term "fictionality" already in its founding name. It remains to be seen which impact this current trend will have on film theory in particular, but also on theorizing fiction in general.

Taking a closer look at recent developments within the field, the shift towards "fictionality" has its roots in a "rhetorical turn", emphasizing the communicative aspects of narratives – both fictional and nonfictional, and in different medial manifestations (cf. Simona Zetterberg Gjervlesen 2016). By widening the scope of traditional narratology, even political speech and everyday communication have now become relevant objects of research for "fictionality scholars". However, the field of cinematic fiction remains understudied.

Instead, this shift towards rhetorical models of fictionality is often paired with a renewed interest in theories of communication. Different models of communication – for example narrative literary communication originally developed for the theory of the novel as well as for oral storytelling – have all been successful ingredients of recent theoretical approaches towards the notion of fiction in general, and to different subdisciplines of fiction and nonfiction in particular. These approaches towards fictionality often share with earlier attempts an interest in linguistic communication models, such as speech act theory, and they draw heavily on the theoretical building blocks erected by scholars of literary theory. Philosophical approaches to fiction have been somewhat neglected in this context. But also in film studies, with its disciplinary tradition often in various departments of language and literature, there seems to exist a strong affinity towards more traditional approaches to fiction based on narrative communication models, as well as narratological approaches to theatre and drama.

With the current interest in the communicative aspect of fiction, the very notion of fiction has received less interest in film studies. For example, important consequences for the visual and audio level in filmic representations have largely been neglected. Arguably, the film has been subsumed far too easily within the communicative paradigm, in particular when generalists have addressed literary fiction. But even film- and media-specific approaches towards the notion of fiction often make use of communication models: The latest large attempt to define the notion of fiction within the German speaking research community, Dominik Orth's monograph *Narrative Wirklichkeiten: Eine Typologie pluraler Realitäten in Literatur und Film* (2016), explains cinematic fiction in terms of a communication model based on the notion of the so-called "double communication situation" ("Doppelte Kommunikationsituation"), adapted and slightly modified to meet certain intermedial challenges, but basically based on Frank Zipfel's (2001) and earlier scholars' definitions of the literary narrative communication model for fictional narrative, and in particular the novel.

A surprising claim made in Orth's work is, that although he admits the controversial status of the fictional narrator in fiction film (David Bordwell 1985; Noël Carroll 2008), he insists that the double communicative model is still applicable to film as much as to literature. In both cases, according to Orth, the narrator is the imaginary narrative instance and its imaginary addressee, and it appears that the communication between the actual author(s) and the recipient(s). Interestingly, it is precisely this double structure that is constitutive of narrative fiction in Orth's view. It is disappointing, however, that although realizing the need to theorize fiction in film, he explicitly dismisses Kendall L. Walton's (1990) approach as allegedly incapable of dealing with the double communication model. Perhaps the greatest loss of the book's contribution is a useful overview of the relationships between narrative theory and fiction theory starting with Hamburger's (1957) attempts to define the distinction between factual and fictional narratives in her work, seconded by the perceptive account of how in German-language film studies theorizing fiction is rare exercise to be found only adjacently in discussions of documentary film.⁵

Roughly the same holds for another recent publication in German on the topic, Florian Mundhenke's (2017) investigation into "hybrid forms" in which he examines border cases of cinematic representations between film and documentary. Again, it is a literary model, based partially on Frank Zipfel's monograph on literary theory and at the time of its publishing already somewhat outdated) linguistic approach by Georg Weidacher, that is proposed.

This result is to some extent in contrast to other recent contributions to the field outside from film studies. The latest, most thorough and influential, contribution to the field in German is without doubt the fundamental anthology *Fiktionalität. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, edited by Tobias Klauk and Timmann Koppe (2014). The 538 pages interdisciplinary handbook compiles 22 contributions by different experts from various fields, addressing theories of fictionality from wide-ranging perspectives, such as (mainly analytical) philosophy, evolutionary psychology, empirical reader-response psychology, and summarises the debates about fictionality in relation to ancient, medieval and early modern literature, addresses fictionality within film- and media studies, arts and aesthetics, as well as the relation of fictionality and historiography. Even though some of the articles are devoted to speech-act theory and language-based questions of semantics and ontology, the main focus of the handbook tends towards alternative ways of theorizing fiction. The institutional theory of fiction, as proposed by Steil Haugevåg Olsen and Peter Lemarque, together with Kendall L. Walton's and Gregory Currie's make-believe approaches, are clearly the two dominant theoretical schools in the handbook, while purely literary approaches like Richard Walsh's theory and other, primarily language-based theories are less prominent. This focus opens for fruitful discussions about fiction and fictionality in other media than literature.

In accordance with the view expressed earlier in this introduction, film studies have been less interested in theoretical debates about fictionality, despite the fact that the history of film, in particular within the last decades, has seen an increase of hybrid forms, seemingly blurring the lines between fiction and nonfiction. However, the theoretical approaches to fiction, given the prominent theoretical approaches in the handbook's article on fictionality in film- and media studies, written by Jan-Noël Thon, are the theories by Kendall Walton, Gregory Currie, and Marie-Laure Ryan. Thon states that well-grounded discussions about theories of fiction are rather rare within film studies and finds the results of his search for thorough theoretical discussions about the fictionality of film rather "sparse" ("ernüchternd"). Even though, since the scope of Thon's entry to the handbook also includes media studies in general, the prominence of theoreticians like Walton, Currie, and Ryan does not come as a surprise; Thon advocates transmedial approaches towards fiction film, and suggests that general theories both can enrich the discussion within film studies, as well as film and other media studies can have a profound impact on general theories. This interrelationship, however, needs to be explored further.

Although quite uneven, the most relevant recent German-language contribution to the study of fictionality in film is Gertrud Koch and Christiane Voss' 2009 edited volume "Es ist, als ob": *Fiktionalität in Philosophie, Film- und Medienwissenschaft*. As the subtitle suggests, the collection does not focus solely on film, but includes contributions to the theory of fictionality more generally. Maria E. Reicher (2009), for instance, investigates the ontological status of fictional objects with a special interest on fictional characters. Interestingly, she starts off by discussing the existence of nonexistent entities (based on the work of the Austrian philosopher Alexius Meinong) which regularly use fictional characters as examples. In her view, proper nonexistent objects are objects such as squared circle or the king of France whereas fictional objects such as the detective Colombo have an ontology of their own. In another philosophical essay, Georg W. Bertram (2009) focuses on different uses of fictionality in speech. Specifically, he argues that, although they are both self-referential methods of explicating the world, we should distinguish between literary fiction and thought experiments.

Other pieces in the Koch and Voss' volume are devoted to theorizing film but appear to engage the notion of film fiction only tangentially at best. In his discussion of the analogy between architectural space and the space constructed by film, Martin Seel (2009) devotes a single footnote to the difference between fiction and fiction, which he defines as the stylistic features of film. Numerous studies have shown, however, that nonfiction can use stylistic features generally associated with fiction and vice versa. Josef Früchtl (2009) criticises Gilles Deleuze's idea that cinema after the Second World War brings back Descartes in the existence of the external physical reality which has been put in doubt since Descartes. Früchtl rightly points out that the antidotes to Deleuze that Deleuze mistakenly assumes cinema are not film-specific but typical of other arts as well. But Früchtl misses the opportunity to discuss whether fictional art forms provide the remedy somehow differently from nonfictional ones.

Still other contributions start off from a more general engagement with fiction and then zoom in on film fiction. Brigitte Hilmer (2009) usefully distinguishes between fiction and illusion, where the former is understood as assertions which do not refer to the actual world, and the latter as errors in perception. She also points out that it makes no sense to ask about temporal relations between the story world, on the one hand, and the audience, on the other. In her discussion of film fiction, she argues that despite its visual richness, the film character remains indeterminate much like in literary fiction. Hilmer's problem, however, remains that she still understands fiction primarily based on the linguistic model of assertions and references, which does not do justice to the fact that fiction is not only a linguistic model, but also a performative one. To develop a view of fiction which does not solely focus on propositions but insists on immersion which she construes as both bodily and mental engagement with the film text, Christiane Voss (2009) builds on Coleridge's account of fiction as "willing suspension of disbelief". To do so she draws on Theodor Lipps' theory of empathy, Marie-Laure Ryan's theory of centering, and Wolfgang Iser's account of the imaginary. But if, according to Voss, immersion is the crucial component of fiction, then documentaries which are highly successful at eliminating our attention from the environment and focusing it on the artefact should also count as fictions. Not to mention that "willing suspension of disbelief" revolves around belief rather than imagination or "as if" attitudes.

The most lucid essay in the volume is Ryan's piece "Fiktion, Kognition und nichtverbalbe Medien" (2009). She provides a succinct account of the main analytic approaches to fiction by John Searle (1975), David Lewis (1978), Gregory Currie (1990), and Kendall Walton (1990). Although generally in agreement with Walton's view that fictional artworks are to be understood not as assertions but as props which mandate specific imaginings and hence games of make-believe, she also highlights their differences. For Ryan, the key term is recentering, which denotes positioning in a different, fictional world. Contra Voss, she argues that recentering should be distinguished from immersion, but that immersion, as immersed in nonfictional and fictional works alike. Recentering, moreover, is not a feature of all imaginings, because there are imaginings like counterfactuals which do not recenter, since they speak of our own rather than other worlds. In approaching the discussion of fiction, she raises the question of how we can accomplish this recentering while focusing on events as conveyed by some present to the fictional narrator in literature or whether we should imagine ourselves being equivalent at the fictional events as they unfold. An important point when it comes to the broader category of image-based media, Ryan dismisses both Walton's idea that all images are fictions (i.e., mandate imaging their content) and Lorenzo Menou's (2005) theory of the double communication model. She argues that the notion of narrative is the closest to the view that images which provide visual information about existent objects are nonfictional such as figurative portraits of actual people (e.g. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' *Napoleon se lev sur le trône impérial* / *Napoleon I on his imperial throne*) whereas those which invite us to imagine their content are fictional (such as depictions of mythical beings like e.g. Emil Doepler's *Walhall* / *valhalla*). But at the end of the text, she states that there are images such as Pablo Picasso's 1910 cubist portrait of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler for which the nonfiction distinction is irrelevant. She identifies categories of works in other arts for which the same obtains – e.g. such of lyrical poetry or experimental cinema. Perhaps most importantly, Ryan warns against expanding the notion of fiction to media such as music and architecture, since in these cases the application could certainly have very little to do with folk understanding of fiction.

Unfortunately, none of the volume's authors engage in much detail with either of Ryan's two key contributions: the need to discuss a theory of fiction that is applicable to a range of media and the film-specific problems of fiction. In fact, the two essays that focus specifically on the status of fiction in fiction film – Gertrud Koch (2009) and Vinzenz Hediger (2009) – espouse an almost opposite strategy which argues that the film's fictionality is determined by the properties of the film medium.

It comes naturally then that in the opening contribution to our Special Issue, Mario Sluġan (2019) points to pitfalls of such an approach and advocates for a theoretical framework which accommodates the transmedial nature of fiction. He goes as far as to suggest that an artwork's fictional status may change over time and that the period of early cinema up to approximately 1918 is a perfect timeframe for studying such transformations. To do so, it is necessary to combine film history and philosophical aesthetics.

Natalija Majsova (2019), next, investigates the relationship between the historical truth of the Soviet space exploration and a string of Russian films from 2010s dealing with the Soviet space age. Most importantly for this Special Issue, she explores the relationship between the fictionalization of historical events and the use of newrest footage and rain the question of whether the films she analyses are better understood as science fiction films rather than historical dramas.

In the first Croatian-language piece to appear in *Apparatus*, Krunoslav Lučić (2019) continues the issue with an in-depth analysis of intertextuality in Ante Babaja's nominally documentary film *Dobra jutro / Good Morning* (2007, Croatia). Whereas scholars have previously mostly focused on the incorporation of actuality footage into fiction films, Lučić is particularly interested in the opposite, i.e. in the way in which Babaja integrates clips from his earlier fiction films into his latest production.

Aleksandar Bošković (2019) then tackles an artist with whom Babaja shared Yugoslav nationality before the breakup of the federal republic – Slobodan Ćijan. Most importantly, the essay moves away from the analyses of the film medium to investigate Ćijan's short-lived film *Leaflet* as a form of experimental film practice where fiction is understood as a relational function of dispositive/dispositive.

In the final contribution to the Special Issue, Enrico Terrone (2019) reviews the recent conference on fictional characters that took place in Prague this April and gives good reason to think that the recent engagement with the analytic philosophy's approach to fiction in the region will bear fruit also for the analysis of film fiction.

In lieu of conclusion, it remains to spell out the goals of this Special Issue: 1) an overview of the understanding of fiction in regional film fiction, 2) a contribution to theorizing film fiction, and 3) a call to further engagement with the notion. Regarding 1), it is necessary to point out that although there is not much interest in theorizing fiction in fiction film at present, the region has produced some of the key work on fiction in general, starting at least with Vaihinger. Moreover, this disinterest in the specificities of film fiction should not be too discouraging for it is by no means characteristic of the region. Both the French and Anglo-American tradition of film theory have had little to say on the status of fiction in fiction film with Robert Olin (1995, 2000) and analytic philosophers interested in film (Noël Carroll 1997; George M. Wilson 2011) as the most notable exceptions.

The essays presented here should, therefore, be of interest not only to those working on Central and Eastern European cinemas but also to film scholars in general who wish to learn more about the specificities of film fiction. Crucially, the methodological lesson that the editors hope to impart is that fiction should be understood as a transmedial phenomenon which does not include only literary works, but also film, video games, role playing games, painting, photography, sculpture, graphic novels, music, etc. Moreover, with such a range of artforms it should also be readily apparent that not all fictions make assertions and that fictions need not necessarily revolve around propositions. In other words, the starting point in theorizing film fiction should be a general theory of fiction (like Walton's) which accommodates this transmedial and assertion-neutral nature of fiction rather than the one which privileges literary fiction and communication models. Following this line of action, we can proceed to investigate media-specific questions such as whether fiction films have narrators, what precisely we are supposed to imagine when hearing and watching a fiction film, what is the importance of facts in historical fiction films or how footage from fiction film operate in a documentary context, to name just a few important questions for the future.

Lastly, it remains to be answered why we should be interested in theorizing film fiction in the first place. There are at least two important reasons. Determining whether something is fiction or not is crucial for our engagement with it. To know a work's fictional status is to know whether to epistemically evaluate its claims to truth or to regard it as a source of potential enjoyment. Consider, for example, how different it would be to treat *Fuocoammare* / *Fire at Sea* (Gianfranco, Italy, 2016) – the 2016 Berlinale winner about the migrant plight on Lampedusa – as fiction rather than as a documentary. At the same time, at least since Plato has been assumed that fiction influences beliefs and its imaginaries, we should assume the importance of film fiction in the current media ecology, the fact that numerous consumers get much information about the world – especially about history – from cinema, and that fiction film is assumed to influence our treatment of social groups in lieu with the politics of representation, it is particularly worth exploring whether fiction actually changes beliefs or not.⁶ But if the answer to these questions is that we should appreciate that the personification mechanisms at work in fiction and nonfiction cannot be the same, for fiction is currently understood as an adaptive addition to the cognitive apparatus whose key is the shutting down of aversion towards nonfactual information (John Tooby and Leda Cosmides 2011). Therefore, the appeal to the notions of "willing suspension of disbelief" and "illusion" – the mainstays of thinking about film fiction – cannot help us to accomplish this work because they mistakenly assume that fiction is essentially about belief – a key feature of nonfiction. This introduction has hopefully demonstrated that instead it is the "as if" attitude or the imaginative engagement that is at the core of fiction, filmic or otherwise.

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Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Fictional Worlds

A Reflexive Report from The XIV Prague Interpretation Colloquium

Enrico Terrone

Keywords

fictional world; analytic aesthetics; fiction theory; narrative semantics; visual narratives

From the 8th to the 10th of April 2019 philosophers and scholars in literature, film studies, and media studies met in Prague to discuss the notion of fictional worlds in the XIV Prague Interpretation Colloquium, "Thinking and Speaking about Fictional Worlds", organised by Tomáš Koblížek on behalf of the Czech Academy of Sciences (Institute of Philosophy, Department of Analytic Philosophy). The event nicely complements the editions of the Colloquium on aesthetic illusion (in 2015) and pretence (in 2018), two notions which seem to concern our attitudes towards this year's theme of fictional worlds. However, this edition of the Colloquium also reveals interesting connections to the recent editions focusing on writers who created outstanding fictional worlds, namely, Beckett (in 2016) and Kafka (in 2017).

The key methodological feature shared by all these editions is the dialogue between aestheticians in the analytic tradition and scholars who investigate and theorise specific forms of art or media. In the 2019 edition, such duality was perfectly exemplified by the presence of Gregory Currie and Tomas Pavel. On the one hand, Currie is a leading figure of contemporary analytic aesthetics who significantly contributed to connecting narratology to contemporary research in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science, in particular in his book *The Nature of Fiction*. This was published in 1990, the same year another milestone of contemporary philosophy of fiction, Kendall Walton's *Mimesis as Make Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* appeared. On the other hand, Pavel is the author of *Fictional Worlds* (1986), which like Marie-Laure Ryan's *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (1992) and Lubomír Doležel's *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds* (1998) is a milestone of "fiction theory".

In his book, Pavel applied possible world theory to literature, arguing that the key difference between fictional worlds and the actual world is that the latter is complete whereas the former are incomplete. Realist writers like Balzac or Flaubert try to minimise such incompleteness whereas modernist writers such as Kafka and Beckett bring it to the fore. But in both cases incompleteness remains an essential feature of fictional worlds. This involves a sharp difference between novels, which build up incomplete fictional worlds, and works of history, which are about the complete actual world. Thus, works of fiction are not constrained by empirical evidence in the way works of history are. In his Prague talk, Pavel claims that this specificity allows works of fiction to configure characters and events in order to focus on human actions and norms and to explore a variety of moral attitudes.

Just as Pavel's talk discusses the specificity of fiction with respect to history, Currie's discusses the specificity of fiction with respect to science. He argues that scientists also create fictional worlds when they conceive thought-experiments such as Maxwell's demon or Einstein's elevator. However, these worlds essentially differ from those created by works of fiction since in the former only propositional content matters whereas in the latter the mediation of style is crucial.

The duality of approaches exemplified by Pavel's and Currie's talks also characterises other contributions to the conference. On the philosophical side, Marion Renauld, Anders Pettersson, Petr Kotátko, and Carola Barbero directly address the notion of fictional world. Renauld begins by considering a series of reasons that lead us to speak of fictional world, then criticises them, and finally suggests that it would be better to give up this notion in order to focus on the symbolic contributions whereby works of fiction can shed light on the actual world. Pettersen also expresses scepticism of the notion of fictional worlds, which he sees as undue objectification of the meaning of a work. In a similar sceptical vein, Kotátko argues that works of fiction are not about fictional worlds but rather concern the actual world itself, though considered in the "as-if mode". Barbero, instead, defends Pavel's view that fictional worlds are different from the actual world in virtue of their incompleteness, and, by relying on Roman Ingarden's *The Ontology of the Work of Art* (1962), she highlights the ontological underpinnings of this view and its relevance for appreciation.

Moving from the ontology of fictional worlds to the philosophy of language, Enrico Grosso, Fredrik Stjernberg, and Lee Walters investigate the meaning of names and propositions that constitute works of fiction. Grosso conceives of fictional names as enabling a vicarious way of thinking similar to that whereby we represent the conception that a certain individual X has of another individual Y (for instance, Michelet's conception of Robespierre). In the special case of fictional names, Grosso contends, X is a work of fiction and Y a fictional character. Stjernberg, instead, denies that fictional names are genuine names by arguing that they lack the essential feature of names, which is reference, that is, the actual connection between the name and its bearer. In the case of fictional names, reference is replaced by a shared cognitive attitude whose focus of attention is not occupied by anything. Finally, Walters analyses the way in which sequels such as *Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back* (Irvin Kershner, 1980, USA) can affect which propositions are true according to a fiction. For instance, the sentence "Luke is Vader's son" uttered by a spectator of *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope* (George Lucas, 1977, USA) in 1977 seems to express a false proposition whereas it seems to express a true proposition if uttered by a spectator of the same film in 2019.

Beside ontology and language, fictional worlds raise interesting philosophical issues as regards their creation by authors and their appreciation by audiences, which are addressed by Zsófia Zvolenszky and Göran Rossholm. Specifically, Zvolenszky focuses on creation by highlighting how authors can inadvertently create some objects and features of a fictional world while Rossholm focuses on appreciation by arguing that our reception of fiction consists of experiencing ourselves as being informed of what is going on in a fictional world; he thus characterises immersion as a mode of reception in which we experience ourselves as being directly informed instead of through words or any other media.

The key link between creation and appreciation is the notion of narrative, the topic of the talks given by Enrico Terrone and Josep Corbí, who both rely on Currie's proposals in *Narrative and Narrators* (2010). Terrone conceives of narrative as a representation of events whereby an author provides an audience with points of view on the world in which those events occur while Corbí analyses the notion of point of view and argues that this involves not only a representation of what happens in the fictional world but also an expression of how to respond to those events, especially in emotional terms.

All those philosophical contributions are counterbalanced by six talks focused on specific forms of art or media: Espen Aarseth and Paweł Grabarczyk on videogame and virtual reality; Niklas Forsberg and Radomír Kokeš on film, and Bohumil Fořt and Ondřej Sládek on literature. Considering the real financial gains or losses that can occur within a videogame, Aarseth argues that they are an important and growing part of our real world rather than fictions. In a similar vein, Grabarczyk claims that the objects that constitute a virtual reality environment are real things made of computer states just as ordinary tables and chairs are real things made of wood or plastic; what matters is their function, not their structure.

Drawing on some insights by Stanley Cavell, Forsberg takes a sequence from *Alien: Resurrection* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1997, USA) as an example of how a cinematic fictional world can teach us something by virtue of, rather than in spite of, being fictional. Kokeš focuses instead on a peculiar cinematic genre that he calls "spiral narrative", which essentially involves time loops. This is a genre whose paradigm is Harold Ramis' 1993 film *Groundhog Day*, with *Source Code* (Duncan Jones, 2011, USA), *Edge of Tomorrow* (Doug Liman, 2014, USA) and *Before I Fall* (Ry Russo-Young, 2017, USA), and the TV show *Russian Doll* (Natasha Lyonne, Amy Poehler, and Leslye Headland, 2019 – , USA), as more recent instances. Relying on a taxonomy introduced by Doležel in *Heterocosmica*, Kokeš points out that spiral narratives involves four modalities: an alethic one that makes the fictional world different from ours as regards space, time, and causation; an epistemic one that enables the hero to know more than the other characters about the spiral; an axiologic one that provides the hero with the opportunity to become a better person thanks to the experience of the spiral; a deontic one in which the experience of the spiral leads the hero to challenge certain norms.

Kokeš's reference to Doležel's theory leads us to Fořt's and Sládek's talks, which both reflect on literature by drawing on the contributions of the great Czech literary scholar who died in 2017. Fořt develops Doležel's idea that gaps in the fictional world are produced by missing information in the narrative texture while Sládek highlights the methodological background of Doležel's narrative semantics, which rests upon the notions of structure (how the elements of a narrative are related) and function (which role each elements plays in the narrative). Doležel, who gave one of his last talks at the X Prague Interpretation Colloquium in 2015, is also commemorated in the inaugural address that Petr Kotátko gives as Faculty Member of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. As Kotátko points out, the fiction theory has its roots in central Europe thanks to Doležel, born in Czechoslovakia, and to Pavel, born in Romania.

During this XIV Prague Interpretation Colloquium, which was dedicated to the memory of Doležel and featured Pavel as keynote speaker, fiction theory has profitably interacted with analytic aesthetics. The two approaches share the interest for fictional worlds. Yet, as pointed out by Currie's comments on Sládek's talk on Doležel's methodology, they essentially differ since fiction theory focuses on textual structures and functions whereas analytic aesthetics ascribes a key role to mental states, in particular intentions and imaginings. This methodological gap is equally relevant when one moves from literature to visual narratives such as films or videogames. The XIV Prague Interpretation Colloquium not only made us aware of this gap but also provided helpful insights in order to overcome it.

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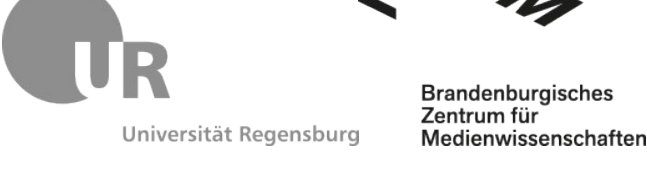
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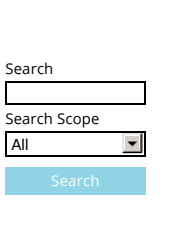


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